

POISONED AIR

The youngest members of any species are always protected by the older, stronger members. Humans protect our children as well. We vaccinate our children against possible diseases, we buy Velcro shoes so there's no worry of untied-shoelaces-induced falling and we even wrap them up in extra layers just to keep them warm. If protecting our children is so important, why do we ignore the health of the environment they live in?

Beyond Toxics conducted a study in 2013 in West Eugene that showed that the average percentage of high schoolers who suffer from self-reported asthma was 19 percent, middle schoolers were 17 percent, elementary schoolers were 10 percent, and kindergarten through 8th grade schoolers were 12 percent. Asthma is a side effect of the toxic emissions from the nearby factories. Other side effects include rashes and an inability to play outside.

We try to protect our children from diseases, but we ignore something they might have caught from the air they breathe. We need to not only protect them from the cold, but from the polluted heavy air they breathe every day. The very air they breathe is poison to their lungs, poison

to their voices and poison to their lives.

*Oona Schwanekamp
Eugene*

INDUSTRY'S IMPACT

I am concerned about industrialization polluting our homes and our city. More and more respiratory, reproductive and overall medical problems are affecting us and our children, but it is "justified" with the flawed idea that cities must always continue to grow. Envision Eugene has produced a plan of action that expands the urban growth boundary closer to the Bethel homes so that there are new jobs for the growing population. What they didn't tell us from the start is how many negative effects this industrial growth will have on us.

I don't have a proposal regarding how to better run the city, but I know that we should not place factories directly next to our homes, and I know that we can't risk increasing medical issue rates. Most of all I know that there has got to be a better plan than the one Eugene has proposed.

*Sophia Knoles
Eugene*

PEOPLE OVER PROFITS

To see the place that I grew up in being polluted and ruined to an extent that it is being right now is truly upsetting. I am a freshman in high school right now, and we've been learning about the industrial plants in west Eugene. I can easily remember all the fun I've had throughout my years while playing outside with my friends at recess or after school.

But hearing that schools in west Eugene have to prevent children from playing at recess breaks my heart and infuriates me because these plants are juggernauts. Our laws about pollution feel toothless, because these industrial plants have exceeded their pollution allowance multiple times with the only punishment being small fines.

It's time that we add harsher restrictions and punishments for industries going over their pollution limits. The asthma rates in children in west Eugene are at 14 percent, while other areas are at 8 percent. It's time that our government stops thinking about profits and starts thinking about the people.

*Pearce Campbell
Eugene*

SUPPORT CLIMATE BILL

In 2007 the Oregon Legislature set goals for reductions in Oregon's greenhouse gas emissions. It is essential that these goals be met in order to do our part in helping to avert changes in the climate that would not be conducive to our economy and ways of living, as we currently enjoy them. This is the biggest threat our society faces.

The expert panel in our state, the Oregon Global Warming Commission, reports that we are not on track to meet those reduction goals. The state Legislature could pass, in the upcoming session, a bill that would gradually reduce Oregon's greenhouse gas emissions through a system of allotments for emissions that would be monitored. Other states are already doing this and are achieving necessary results.

Oregonians should contact their state senators and representatives and ask for support of the "Healthy Climate Bill," which is sponsored by Sen. Chris Edwards of Eugene.

*Stephen M. Amy
Eugene*

VIEWPOINT BY OTTO POTICHA

Kesey Square Cannot Be Replaced

BUILDING ON THE SQUARE IS NOT SMART URBAN PLANNING

A number of letters and comments have appeared recently regarding local developers' proposal to solve the traveler/transient problem in downtown by filling Kesey Square with a five-story apartment building. Downtown Eugene Inc. and the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce have both come out in favor of this closing of the commons and privatizing of our public land.

But, as it turned out at the Mayor's Downtown Solutions Forum on public space last week, the large crowd that assembled did not want to lose Kesey Square or the opportunity to improve it as vital urban public space.

They spoke up for more public space development in downtown, not less, and they called for not just more spaces, but for the recognition of the need for a *variety* of kinds of public spaces that enrich the urban experience.

We were given a presentation that declared there already are a lot of "open spaces" in downtown. Yes there are — mostly in spaces without buildings such as open parking lots, transit uses and engineered (not designed) streets and walkways. Senior City Planner Nan Laurence, who presented this overview, cited examples such as the corner next to the new Lane Community College campus downtown and the wide sidewalk along the new library. These are simply spaces without buildings, not active and participating "active urban open spaces."

Another noted the potential urban open space of the proposed plaza at the "new" City Hall. The proposed plaza there will not be an active open space. It is an ornamental public space unto itself. Compare it with other such ornamental plazas in front of city

halls in other cities. There is usually no one there and no reason to congregate there. Replacing Kesey Square with the proposed City Hall plaza would just amount to trading apples for oranges.

Active open spaces require immediate contact with buildings and they form a partnership with the adjacent uses so they can stimulate and support each other. Kesey Square, at the main intersection of our downtown, when renovated and integrated with adjacent uses, can be that active urban open space that developers would aspire to engage. It could or will stimulate much more future development than filling it up with a building that requires some subsidy (MUPTE) to be successful. Development of Kesey Square as an active urban open space would provide a subsidy in a much more meaningful way. That's what urban planning and city development is about: providing stimulus for development and not just reviewing and jurying developers' proposals.

Filling or eliminating Kesey Square is not good, smart or acceptable urban planning; it is using planning to alleviate a perceived problem. We have a city manager, Jon Ruiz, and City Council who are not trained nor versed in city planning. They are versed in political planning, consensus seeking and vote-gathering.



The build-over and eliminate-the-square developers have been discussing this possibility with the city manager for the past two years. And now to hurry the process, the city has issued an RFEI (request for alternate expressions of interest) to review and present to the council that are due in five short weeks, giving the distinct impression that the train has already left the station. Again, this is not acceptable urban planning; it is closing the public realm and burying some unresolved social problems under a five-story building.

It appears by comments at the public workshop and in the printed media that this community has a deep interest in the matter. The Eugene City Council is the final decision maker, and they will make it based on the manager's recommendation and pressure from their constituents.

I urge those of you who care about your downtown to contact your city council representative and share your opinions. Council members can be and are influenced by those they represent.

Send email comments to the following address: mayorcouncilandcitymanager@ci.eugene.or.us.

Otto P. Poticha is a longtime Eugene architect and adjunct associate professor of architecture at UO.